

Should you or your loved one have a prostate cancer screening?

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Recently, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has caused a lot of confusion by recommending healthy men of all ages no longer receive prostate-specific antigen blood tests as part of routine cancer screening. The recommendation is being made by a panel chaired by a pediatrician that does not include a urologist or medical oncologist.

In 2009, this same task force suggested mammograms were unnecessary for women ages 40-49 and recommended against teaching women to do breast self-examinations. The breast cancer recommendations were overturned by Congress shortly after the an-

nouncements. The USPSTF considered no new research that would call for this drastic change in prostate cancer testing recommendations since they last considered this issue in 2009. In fact, the most recently published study, the Göteborg Randomized Population-based Prostate Cancer Screening Trial (The Lancet Oncology, July 2010), found that with screening, deaths from prostate cancer dropped 44 percent over a 14-year period compared with men who did not undergo screening.

Undeniable Data

Since 1994, even with screening, the incidence of prostate cancer has remained fairly stable, but the death rate from prostate cancer has declined by nearly 40 percent. Studies show doctors are now diagnosing prostate cancer at earlier stages. Earlier diagnosis, due to PSA screening, is saving lives. Still, prostate cancer remains the second leading cause of cancer death in men in the United States, with the National Cancer Institute reporting that 33,720 men will die

from this disease this year, more than one every 30 minutes.

Doctors recognize that prostate cancer is often a slow growing disease. Some patients may only need to be watched. The problem is, the ability to differentiate men with slow growing prostate cancer from the tens of thousands for whom prostate cancer could be fatal is in its infancy. Responsible practitioners are working toward solutions, developing advanced testing and creating guidelines based on the best available literature to assist with making reasoned, informed decisions about appropriate treatment for each man diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Simply, Screening

Particularly troubling is that the USPSTF extrapolates the risks of treatment onto screening. But screening is not treatment; in fact, it is not even diagnosis; it is simply screening via an easy blood test. There are no risks to screening, and to discourage patients the opportunity to participate in decisions regarding their own health care because of concerns about treatments they may never receive is akin to throwing the baby out with the bath water and will put countless men at risk.

Successful prostate cancer treatment depends on early

detection, and studies demonstrate the screening efficiency for prostate cancer is similar to that for breast cancer. The USPSTF suggests waiting until symptoms to look for prostate cancer, but urologists know that this is a tragic error, as early prostate cancer has no distinguishing symptoms. Adoption of the USPSTF recommendations will undo more than two decades of progress in treating prostate cancer.

Treatment decisions should be determined between a man and his own doctor. The government should not be able to deny or discourage a patient's right to choose his own health care destiny.

Colonial Heights & Gardens to host free memory screening event

Where did I put my keys? Did I leave the stove on? Do I have "normal" memory lapses or should I worry?

It is estimated that as many as 5.1 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease. The number is escalating in line with the aging population; the first baby boomers began turning 65 in 2011. Advanced age is the greatest risk factor, with the incidence of the disease doubling every five years between 65 and 95. Memory problems could be caused by Alzheimer's disease or other medical conditions.

National Memory Screening Day serves as a starting point for discussions about memory concerns and lifestyle changes

— diet, managing stress, physical and mental exercise — that may help people age successfully.

Ruwe Family Pharmacy and Senior Helpers will conduct a free confidential memory screening which takes about 10 to 15 minutes and consists of questions and tasks to assess memory. The screening will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 15, at Colonial Heights, 6900 Hopeful Road, Florence, Ky.

Screening is a safe, cost-efficient intervention that can reassure the healthy individual, promotes successful aging and, when indicated, directs individuals to appropriate clinical resources. It does not diagnose any illness, but can indicate whether

someone should pursue a follow-up medical exam. A pharmacist from Ruwe Family Pharmacy will conduct a medication review as part of the screening process.

It is estimated that missed diagnoses of dementia may be as high as 90 percent. The Alzheimer's Foundation of America is a leading national nonprofit organization headquartered in New York that is focused on care for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and related illnesses, and their families. Call (866) AFA-8484 or visit www.alzfdn.org.

To set up an appointment for a screening, call (859) 283-5500. Appointments are suggested but walk-in screenings will also be available.

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The listings with a color screen background have additional information about their center in a display advertisement in this edition.

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